

NICKNAMES IN FRENCH ANTHROPNYMY: A TYPOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT: This article examines nicknames as a distinct category within French anthroponymy from semantic, linguistic, and sociological perspectives. Drawing on the typological classification developed by Billy Pierre-Henri, the study analyses a range of nicknames attested in historical French-speaking communities and systematises them according to their onomastic etymons — geographical affiliation, occupational context, ethnic and national identity, family name derivation, personal given names, physical characteristics, and animal imagery. The research demonstrates that nicknames function as complex anthroponymic units that encode an individual's spatial, social, historical, and cultural positioning within a community. The findings contribute to the broader field of onomastics and offer a structured framework for the study of non-official naming practices in the French linguistic tradition.

Keywords: anthroponymy, onomastics, nickname, French nicknames, typology, linguistic identity, personal naming, ethnogeographic affiliation, socionymy.

INTRODUCTION :Anthroponymy, as a branch of onomastics, holds considerable significance from both semantic and linguistic perspectives. This field places the study of personal names at the forefront of scholarly inquiry. Anthroponyms may be assigned to individual persons or to groups. Individual anthroponyms distinguish a specific person within a community, while group anthroponyms are assigned to collectives on the basis of various criteria — such as genealogical, familial, or dynastic names [1].

Surnames, given names, nicknames, and pseudonyms all constitute primary objects of anthroponymic research. It is within this context that the present article addresses the phenomenon of nicknames in the French language — a subject that merits dedicated scholarly attention.

On the basis of the typological classification elaborated by Billy Pierre-Henri, French nicknames may be systematically presented in the following table [3]:

Category	Nickname	Origin and Meaning
River name	<i>Duruchais</i>	A person who lived along the riverbank
Place of residence	<i>Jean du Val</i>	Jean who lived in a place called "Le Val"
	<i>Nicolas des Creux</i>	Nicolas who lived in the neighbourhood "Les Creux"
	<i>Marie du Moulin</i>	Marie who lived near/at a mill (moulin)



Category	Nickname	Origin and Meaning
	<i>La Sainte-Famille</i>	A family living across from a place of that name
Place of origin	<i>L'Américain</i>	Derived from a farm name
	<i>Gonesse</i>	A person born in Gonesse who had relocated
	<i>Nouméa</i>	A person exiled to Nouméa after the Commune of 1871
Place of work	<i>La Rotonde</i>	Derived from the name of the café where the person worked
	<i>La Bayonnette</i>	Wife of a man who served in the military in Bayonne
	<i>Martin la Lune</i>	Martin, owner of the café "À la lune qui fume"
	<i>La Mère Radis</i>	A woman resembling a Parisian tavern keeper
	<i>Milan</i>	A person who lived or worked at a venue in Milan marked "À l'entrée des Français"
Commemorative place	<i>Le Toupoul</i>	A man who said "Toupoul" instead of "Sébastien"
	<i>Sarragosse</i>	Nickname derived from Marshal Claude Perrin
Ethnogeographic affiliation	<i>Tripas</i>	A person who lived in the village of La Tripais
	<i>Le Parisien</i>	A person born in Paris who had moved away
	<i>Lé Parisien</i>	A person imitating the Parisian dialect



Category	Nickname	Origin and Meaning
	<i>Le Braulé</i>	A person who moved from Braux to Nansous-Thil
	<i>Le Versaillais</i>	A person who participated in the events of the Paris Commune
	<i>Le Mayençais</i>	A person who participated in the defence of Mainz
Country name	<i>Madagascar</i>	A person who took part in the Madagascar campaign
	<i>La Brie</i>	A person who moved from La Ferté-Gaucher
	<i>Laventé</i>	A person who frequently spoke of military service in the Vendée
	<i>Alsace</i>	A person who was very fond of Alsatian wine
	<i>Japon</i>	A person with eyes of Japanese shape
Ethnically based nickname	<i>L'Américain (variants)</i>	Related to America — emigrants, soldiers, cooks, wealthy individuals
	<i>Le Russe</i>	A person who participated in the Crimean campaign and had a thick beard
	<i>Berrichon</i>	A supporter of the Duchess of Berry
	<i>Le Français</i>	A young man who always answered 'I am French'
	<i>El Frinçais</i>	A person who preferred to speak French
	<i>Le Viet</i>	A short person with eyes of Japanese shape



Category	Nickname	Origin and Meaning
Surname-based	<i>Leuzina</i>	A person resembling someone with the surname Luzineau
	<i>Baggio</i>	A person who served in the military in place of someone named Baggio
Name-based	<i>Louis XIV</i>	A person who wore an English-style hairstyle
	<i>Guitou</i>	Given to a person named Guy
	<i>Hortense</i>	A woman very fond of hydrangea flowers
Derived from animal name	<i>Médor (2 cases)</i>	1. A person who followed his superior like a dog; 2. A person who bit others
	<i>Mazina</i>	A tall-legged woman; nickname derived from a horse's name

Personal nicknames fulfil an important linguistic and sociological function in the identification of individuals within society. They typically emerge on the basis of an individual's living environment, professional activity, ethnic background, physical characteristics, or historical context. The following section offers a typological analysis of nicknames classified according to their onomastic etymons.

Geographically Based Nicknames

This group encompasses nicknames derived from rivers (Duruchais), places of residence (Jean du Val, Marie du Moulin), places of origin (Gonesse, Nouméa), commemorative places (Sarragosse, Le Toupoul), and places of work (La Rotonde, Martin la Lune). Nicknames of this type reflect the individual's relationship with a particular geographic location and serve to distinguish them within their community through spatial association.

Occupation- and Activity-Based Nicknames

Nicknames are frequently linked to an individual's professional role within society. Names such as La Bayonnette, La Mère Radis, and Milan are grounded in the bearer's occupational activity or the social position of their spouse. Such nicknames constitute expressive markers of social structure and serve as indicators of a person's role within the community.

Ethnic and National Identity Nicknames

Nicknames of this type encode the bearer's ethnic background, national stereotypes, or participation in geopolitical events. Examples such as L'Américain, Le Russe, Le Français, and Le Viet illustrate how nicknames function as cultural or historically grounded identifiers that



situate the individual within a broader ethnonational context.

Surname- and Given-Name-Based Nicknames

Certain nicknames are derived from hereditary surnames (Leuzina, Baggio) or personal given names (Guitou, Louis XIV, Hortense). These were employed either to link an individual to a familial lineage or to distinguish them as a specific person within a group, thereby fulfilling both genealogical and individualising functions.

Physical Characteristic and Animal-Image Nicknames

Nicknames may also arise from an individual's physical appearance or characteristic behaviour. For example, Mazina (derived from a horse's name) was assigned to a tall-legged woman, while Médor (evoking canine behaviour) designated either a person who followed their superior obsequiously or one prone to biting. Such nicknames identify the bearer not merely through a name, but through a vivid characterisation of their distinctive traits.

CONCLUSION

Personal nicknames constitute a complex anthroponymic system that encodes an individual's position within society, their historical traces, cultural origins, and visual and linguistic markers. Shaped by the forces of language and culture, they serve as an informal yet powerful instrument for distinguishing individuals both within and beyond their immediate community.

The typological classification presented in this study reveals that French nicknames are not arbitrary designations; rather, they are semantically motivated units that systematically reflect the geographic, professional, ethnic, genealogical, and physical characteristics of their bearers. Each category of nickname represents a distinct mode of social identification and constitutes an integral component of the anthroponymic heritage of the French-speaking world.

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